close your eyes and make it real

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/57526612.

Rating:
Not Rated

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
M/M

Fandoms:
American (US) Actor RPF, Actor RPF

Relationship:
Ben Affleck/Matt Damon

Characters:
Ben Affleck, Matt Damon

Additional Tags:
Love Confessions, Idiots in Love, I Was Drunk When I Wrote This, Good Will Hunting (1997) References, Friendship/Love, Friends to Lovers

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2024-07-20 Words: 4,221 Chapters: 1/1

close your eyes and make it real

by lohoron

Summary

They’re writing what they know. *Ben* is writing what he knows.

So when Matt asks:

“Chuckie’s, like, totally in love with Will, right?”

It’s fair to say that Ben freaks out a little.

Notes

title from what's important by beat happening !

Ben is not a writer.

Sure, he took a creative writing class in high school without wanting to hang himself, but he's not *good* at that sort of thing. There's something about writing that bothers him; a script never feels quite completed.

And he's read plenty of them. That's fine. He can admit to wiping a few tears from his cheeks after reading Kramer vs. Kramer in a way not dissimilar to the tears he wiped from his cheeks when he watched it. He gets it; he's not detached from the words. That's not the problem.

The problem is that writing something relies on making shit up. And when other people have made shit up, it feels real. Honest. When *you* have spent hours, days, months, *years*, making shit up, it feels like a farce. Like you're trying to convince yourself. Ben is not good at being convinced of anything.

Then there's the vulnerability of writing. The way it gets personal regardless of whether he wants it to or not. How the layaway sandwich riff was based on a joke his buddy Aaron made in high school when he forgot his wallet. How Matt's first date was startlingly similar to the one Skylar and Will had. How honestly and concretely Boston influences the script.

They're writing what they know. *Ben* is writing what he knows.

So when Matt asks:

"Chuckie's, like, totally in love with Will, right?"

It's fair to say that Ben freaks out a little.

A pickle slice falls from Ben's lips to the carpet as he stares over at Matt, hoping that he heard him wrong, nearly reaching for a page of the script instead of the pile of napkins right next to it.

He wipes his mouth, holds his burger in one hand, and chokes out a, "What?"

"The whole *if you're still here in twenty years, I'll kill you* monologue?" Matt takes a fry from Ben's container, completely unfazed or completely unaware of what he's even saying. "Most romantic shit you've written."

Ben blinks and makes a point to stare over Matt's shoulder at the previous tennant's bedpost scuff marks on the wall behind him. "You helped," he says, like an accusation.

Matt shrugs, takes a bite of his burger that drags a slice of tomato from between the buns. He doesn't bother chewing before he speaks. "Mostly you. It's good, dude," he swallows his bite and grabs the tomato from the carpet, throwing it onto his container's lid, "I don't deserve the credit for that."

"Why is it romantic?" Ben asks quickly, can't help himself, sucking down a large sip of his beer. They hadn't discussed this. They never sat down and said *Chuckie is gay and in love with his best friend who he grew up with in Boston.* Ben thinks that's the kind of thing you discuss with each other before getting into act three of the screenplay you're writing together. It *should* be.

Matt shrugs again, like all of this is so goddamn casual and no frills. "Just the idea of it. He loves Will but he'd rather know he's, like, doing better things with his life than slumming it for the sake of familiarity. Loves him enough to let him go."

Ben swallows a terrible feeling. *Loves him enough to let him go.*

("If you could choose," Matt started, belching as he squashed his empty Coke can on the tile beneath him, "how would you die?"

Ben blinked, face turned into an intrigued smile, because *what?*

Stone-cold sober on the kitchen floor after successfully putting out a grease fire, Matt Damon asked Ben Affleck how he wanted to die. Didn't bother looking him in the eyes, just pressed his socked foot against Ben's to edge him on a bit.

"The fire scare you that bad?" Ben chuckled, taking a bite from the pizza they picked up after said fire was calmed.

Matt scoffed, as if a threat to one's livelihood was nothing to be afraid of, and kicked Ben's shin. "No."

It was completely unconvincing. Even Matt knew it. He looked over at Ben, saw some sort of look in his eyes, perhaps of amusement, and scoffed again while looking away. "Fine, yeah, maybe."

"This building's definitely not up to code," Ben laughed back, scooting closer without making it obvious that he was trying to make Matt feel

better about being reasonably anxious. Their shoulders rubbed together when Matt let out a similar chuckle. “We should buy our own fire alarm.”

“I can’t believe it didn’t go off,” Matt mumbled back, rubbing his eyes with his palms, staring out at the cabinet with the unhinged door in front of him. “We should,” he concluded before opening another can of Coke.

Ben didn’t say anything for a little while. Mostly because he was thinking about it; how would he wanna die?

Not in a fire. The smoke would be atrocious. It’d be a slow death for him in the sense that it might take a couple of hours for the tar to build high enough in his lungs to do real, permanent damage. Drowning didn’t sound too hot either. Filling with fluid. Faster, maybe, but scarier.

Dying didn’t sound too good either way. In any way.

“What about you?” He asked, suddenly, looking over at Matt’s confused face registering his own question from just a couple of minutes ago.

Matt took another sip and immediately afterwards pensively took a bite from the slice Ben had put down. He just shrugged. “Probably some freak accident. Like a rollercoaster ride malfunctioning or a zipline giving way.”

“Jesus,” Ben muttered, but he was grinning, because Matt *would* want to be all pumped up with adrenaline before dying.

“You?” Matt deflected quickly, clearly attempting to keep the spotlight off of his own answer.

It was strange. Sometimes, Ben’s mouth talks for him before his brain can even catch up, spouting out truths he didn’t realize resided in the sacred parts of his cerebrum until they’re out there, in the real world, undeniably honest.

“Slowly, I think.”

Matt bumped his shoulder with his own. “C’mon. Be serious.”

“No, not, like— Not like I’m being *tortured* or anything. Just— Some disease. It hurts less for everybody when it’s not this instant and

terrifying separation. If it happens gradually, everyone will… I don't know. They'll see it coming, I guess. Easier."

Matt blinked a couple times. Ben noticed the way he set down their shared slice. "Easier for who?"

Ben shrugged, refused to turn his head even though he felt Matt's eyes burning a hole into his cheekbone. "You. My parents. Casey. I don't know. I might suffer more, but you guys will— You might be able to live a pretty normal life. Y'know. After that."

Matt didn't say a word, but his head had turned back over to the very uninteresting cabinet in front of him, so Ben figured he'd been gearing up to say something foolishly emotional.

"I don't think I'd be able to go on living normally if I heard you died on a zipline through the fuckin' grapevine," Ben beat him to it, knocked his foot against Matt's leg to show, in some bizarre way, that he was genuine.

"How slow?" Matt wondered, almost too quickly, as if he'd been wondering it since Ben first said the word, all other speech completely in one ear and out the other.

"Couple of years. Just so you might not remember what I used to be like," Ben said, much to his own surprise, quickly following it up by taking a stressed bite of their pizza slice, approaching crust territory.

He'd been surprised then by how much it seemed like he thought about this every day. Like this was something that he had just been dying to be asked.

Truthfully, Ben has avoided any thought of himself, and the people around him, dying.

"Jesus, man," Matt murmured, his hand brought down in between them. He pressed his thumb to Ben's thigh, rubbed it around like a sign of comfort. "I couldn't— I mean, you have to know I wouldn't forget."

Ben didn't. Not really. Not concretely, honestly, undoubtedly. Everybody is replaceable.

[Except Matt.]

"You— I couldn't go on living normally if you died. At all, dude.

Seriously. You're— This is super fuckin' selfish, but I hope to *God* that I die before you because I don't want— I don't wanna have to spend those days or months or years without you."

Ben chuckled through the heartburn feeling he was experiencing and decided it was better to chalk that up to too much pizza and soda than some sort of ache from deep within that he was wholly unable to face. "Gay," he mumbled, whispered, like it was somehow both a compliment and an insult at once.

"Whatever," Matt barked back, looking away, his thumb still pressing into Ben's thigh. "Don't give a shit. I need you, asshole."

"You don't," Ben murmured back in a way he hoped wasn't insulting or annoyingly self-deprecating.

Matt could do anything. With or without anyone. It's one of the only things Ben has always been sure of.

"You want me around. And that's nice, that's good. But you're this— You're *more* than just me. I don't know how else to say it, man." Ben looked over and noticed Matt frowning at him, about to interject, until he shoved the pizza crust in Matt's mouth without a second thought. "That's a good thing, idiot."

Matt spat the crust out immediately, his soothing thumb turning into a flick of his fingers against Ben's temple. "You're saying that like *you* need me around. You're more than me, too. Idiot."

Ben didn't agree. But he's always been good at knowing when to concede, lay down his king and retire, so he just nodded and smiled like he hadn't just made some huge internal revelation.

Ben would die slowly any day if it meant that Matt got to live.)

"I don't know," Ben manages, feeling stupid for being all choked up, solemnly gnawing at a fry. "He's family. They're best friends."

Matt bites the inside of his cheek and squints his eyes, ruminating. He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, grease staying stained across his lips. "I guess I'm thinking about it like I'm Will, you know?"

Which, with just-subtle-enough words implies that Ben is Chuckie, too. Ben avoids looking at Matt and stares down at the almost untouched pool of ketchup beside his burger instead. "How so?"

“Alright. Okay, just— Hear me out, yeah?” Matt starts, and his voice is all giddy the way it only gets when he talks about film and Ben can’t be expected to hide his smile. “His whole life, Will thinks this is it. Southie is *it* — it’s all he’s good for. We know that part. But it’s also… He’s *content* here. Y’know. Being with Chuckie for the rest of his life, slumming it in construction even though he’s a genius, whatever, he doesn’t feel destined for anything else. He doesn’t need to be. In Southie, with his friends, construction site as the backdrop, Will is safe.”

Ben nods. “Yeah. Yeah, sure.”

When he finally dares to look over, Matt is picking at a spot in the carpet, face scrunched up. Ben can tell he’s thinking a mile a minute.

“But then Chuckie, right, he breaks it all down. In just a few minutes, he makes Will realize that he’s not staying in Boston because he wants to — he *needs* to. He’s using Chuckie and his other friends and his misbehavior and his inability to connect with people as an excuse. And he sees it. Only then. Chuckie is… he’s— Chuckie has been so fuckin’ worried about holding him back. And he’s terrified of losing his friend, sure, but he’s even more terrified that *he’s* the reason Will isn’t out there being goddamn Gauss.” Ben chuckles, and he’s about to interrupt, just to ask *How does that mean he’s in love?* when Matt turns to him.

He’s lit by the recklessly bright sun streaming through the window. His skin looks more golden than its usual ivory, hair all outgrown and young and lovely and he’s still pensive, face scrunched, but he softens as soon as he looks at Ben.

(Three years ago, Matt had looked at Ben the same way. Back when the script was still about boy genius being recruited by the government, and they couldn’t stop coming up with worse and worse ideas, escalating the plot to comical levels.

“What if they plant some shit in his brain while he’s asleep?” Ben laughed, but he was honestly being fairly serious, taking another swig from what must’ve been his tenth beer.

They were sprawled out on Ben’s couch, Ben’s arm slung across the back of the seating, Matt’s head thrown back with his hair grazing Ben’s forearm.

Matt grinned, knees touching, and sipped his own beer. “Like a bug? So they can extract information from his brain?”

Ben nodded, turning his head to look at Matt, cheek resting on the back of the couch. “Fuck yeah. And he’s— he’s gotta do surgery on himself. Through his ear.”

“They’ve gotta have a tracking device in there, right?”

Ben scoffed. “Duh.”

Matt laughed, honest and sweet, turning his head to face Ben, too. “He tells his friends and they’re all givin’ the NSA trouble. Playin’ tricks on ‘em.”

The sun had started to come up. Ben realized they shouldn't have started drinking at 2 A.M. when neither of them could sleep. Matt’s eyes were glistening, skin illuminated, hair above his lip coated in beer remnants.

His face had fallen from this boisterously excited laugh to a contemplative softness, like he was examining Ben in detail, mulling over every feature.

“What the fuck are you lookin’ at?” Ben chuckled, vocal chords unsure, the question coming out like a terrified necessity.

Matt didn’t say a word. He just leaned over and kissed Ben, once, no longer than a second, and returned back to staring at him.

It was one of those moments Ben thought he might have imagined. And he didn’t want to deal with the ramifications of having imagined his best friend laying one on him as much as he didn’t want to deal with the ramifications of his best friend *actually* laying one on him, so he didn’t say anything. Pretended like his lips weren’t fucking tingling and his face didn’t feel abuzz and his previous drunkenness wasn’t nearly cancelled out.

He pretended like he didn’t want it to happen again because denial, the pinnacle of comfort, was so much easier to face than the truth.)

“That’s love, you know?” Matt says after a long second, gnawing down on his bottom lip. “Chuckie probably doesn’t even realize it. It’s— It’s probably so familiar that the words feel foreign.”

Ben scratches his fingernails into the carpet and clenches his jaw, repeats Matt’s words in his head.

How familiar is this?

Every moment he spends with Matt feels like a moment that's already happened — a moment that's occurring in perpetuity in every single universe. In every timeline. So comfortable and honest and safe that there is absolutely no reason to ever even bother thinking about it.

Ben doesn't like to think about what life might be like without Matt. He's worse than Chuckie in that sense, painful selflessness is not a skill he could ever type onto his resume, because the idea of letting him go feels so much worse than the idea of holding him back.

He thanks God every day that Matt isn't actually a math genius and he never actually had to choose to express himself enough to drive him away forever.

But maybe he *would* choose that exact thing. He kind of did once he wrote it in — his and Matt's physical identities so intertwined in Will's story that it's hard to seperate them sometimes. That it's hard to write the way Will and Chuckie interact without sewing the fabric of their own friendship into it.

So familiar that the words feel foreign.

It's this crawling feeling. And suddenly he's eight and he sees himself, new to town, to the world, talking to this short little blonde kid at his mom's stupid book club meeting.

Maybe it starts there. Ben isn't sure. Maybe it starts when he finally gets to high school and Matt takes him under his wing, shows him the ropes, teases him just to get teased back. Maybe it starts when Matt gets the lead in Pippin and drinks to celebrate until his cheeks turn pink. Maybe it starts when Matt laughs at Ben's stupid joke until milk spills out his nose at a shared Damon-Affleck family dinner. Maybe it starts when Matt isn't constantly with him anymore, off to college, sometimes letting weeks pass with *God, exams are never-ending* as his cover. Maybe it starts when Matt shows up with pit stains at his front door and shoves scattered coffee-stained papers into his hands. Jesus, maybe it starts right here, or that time Matt might have kissed him, he should really get to the bottom of that, or that time Ben realized he would die in calculated pain if it meant Matt would have ample time to grieve him before he was even gone.

Ben's eyes can't focus on anything, mindlessly drifting across the room, teeth bruxing, whittled down to a theoretical bundle of compact nerve endings burning him alive.

No. *No,* right? He has the words to describe the way he feels about

Matt. Matt is… Matt is— He's— That's fucking *Matt*. He doesn't need anything else.

Matt is talking about Chuckie. Chuckie and Will. Not Ben and Matt. He's not. He's talking about the scene Ben wrote that he somehow believes is romantic even though Ben wrote it, with Matt, mind you, for purposes that were not romantic.

Chuckie loves Will, fine. Sure. Like family. Will is family. Ben loves Matt—

"Ben?" Matt's voice spears into his brain like a bullet.

"What?" Ben snaps back, slightly too irritated, shutting his eyes tightly and loosening the grip he didn't realize he had on his shorts. "I'm just — I'm tired."

Matt nods slowly, like he knows those words aren't truthful. He probably does. Definitely does. Matt always somehow *knows*.

How familiar is this?

This moment. Burgers on the floor, beers in hand, matching eyebags, conversation bordering on inspiring personal revelations, Matt wearing Ben's sweatshirt, Ben wearing Matt's socks, Ben's lungs and heart and throat swollen in a restrictive way, just getting trapped with words he needs buried deeper.

And even after countless hours awake, right now, Matt looks the kind of pretty you can only find sitting across you on a train. The kind of pretty that makes reading a book seem effortless and interesting. The kind of pretty that is always just out of reach.

But Matt isn't sitting across from him on any trains. They sit together, no books in sight, thighs bumping for no reason other than to force closeness, and Ben can turn his head and see the kind of pretty he's not supposed to have access to.

He gets it every day. It's as much part of him as putting on shoes to head out the door is. He doesn't think about it. It just makes sense.

It's too familiar.

Matt closes both of their containers like he's making specific moves to kick them out of that exact familiar gear. Trying to make everything fresh and original, experience unapproachable from a sheer lack of

willpower. He shoves them aside and scoots closer to Ben. His face is all concern and responsibility as if he wants to, needs to, take it all back.

“I think that film class still has me in a chokehold,” Matt chuckles, attempting to lighten the mood, even though Ben doesn’t fucking *want* a lighter mood. “I know I got that Citizen-Kane-gay-lens essay around here somewhere. I’m— I’m overthinking. It’s intriguing.”

He wants to scream at him for starting this and not having the balls to finish it but he can’t because then they’d have to *finish this*. He’s not ready to find out what the words scraping his trachea are.

“What would it change?” Ben’s voice feels small, physically shrunken, as Matt’s knee gently knocks against his own. He coughs and sits up a little. “If he were in love with Will, what would that change?”

Ben doesn’t know why he’s asking. Ben actually wants to lock this whole conversation away in a mental vault and tuck it right next to the glimpse he caught of his naked grandmother. That’d be a good place for this to live.

Matt is thinking, genuinely wondering, biting at the skin around his middle finger.

Ben wonders if he’s trying to think of a way to answer this as Matt or as Will. He fucking hopes it’s Matt.

“I dunno,” Matt responds carefully, wiping his palm on his sweats. “I think— I think maybe it would be, y’know, just another part. Of him. Of them.” He shrugs, but he quickly downs the rest of his beer, so the attempt at staying casual is essentially futile.

Another part of him. Loving Matt is just another part of him.

So familiar he’s learned to just ignore the way his skin stays warm minutes after Matt has touched him. It’s so familiar. Every aspect of Matt is so fucking familiar.

“Would he—” Ben bites down on his bottom lip and wrings his fingers, suddenly propelled back to asking his first girlfriend out in sophomore year. This isn’t that. This is both so much more and so much less. A leap taken on crutches. “Would he ever tell Will, you think?”

The corners of Matt’s lips quirk up, and he runs a shaky hand through

his hair, stealing a quick glance at Ben and showing just how nervous he is, too. “Maybe,” Matt whispers, jagged fingernails working at a stain at the bottom of his sweatshirt’s hem.

It’s silent for a second. The implication of the moment hangs in the air. Ben is left to figure out if he’s overthinking this.

God, of course he loves Matt. He’s never loved anyone like he loves Matt before. He’s the only person Ben could never get tired of living with. The only person who understands what he’s trying to say before he himself even knows. Matt is *perfect* even though he’s really fucking not; messy, intermittently impulsive, annoyingly headstrong and stubborn, forgetful, kicks in his sleep, honest to a fault, possibly America’s worst cook alive, chronic clothing-stealer.

Matt scoots closer again. Knees touching. “He’d do it in some terrible way, though.”

“Like how?” Ben’s voice has shrunk another three inches. He might be in the negatives soon.

“Like— Like, they’d be drunk and eating shitty food and avoiding eye contact.”

Ben’s entire brain short-circuits for a minute, breathing suddenly labored and terrified, trying so hard not to focus on the way Matt smells like they’re back home somehow.

It’s his move. Ben knows this. Feels it inside him almost as clearly as he feels those unknown words Matt was talking about earlier bubbling up and up, stuck behind his grinding teeth.

He doesn’t want things to change. He’s safe like this. Comfortable. Matt-land is one of the few places he feels truly comfortable.

“How do you think…” Ben takes a second, tilts his head in Matt’s direction to see the hopeful glimmer he recognizes from just a few overt moments they’ve shared, and he fights back a smile. “What would Will say?”

And Ben knows that Matt knows that Ben knows. They’re not idiots. Well. About most things, Ben reasons that they’re not idiots.

Matt pokes his tongue past his lips, wetting them, and lets his eyes take a long stroll from the carpet to the script on the floor to the broken lamp in the corner to Ben’s flushed face.

“Somethin’ like—” Matt moves closer again, one knee knocking against Ben’s criss-crossed knee, his other leg stretched besides him. “—I can’t believe that worked, you oblivious fuck,” he whispers, laughing fondly, palm pressed to Ben’s bare calf, smoothing up to round over his knee.

“Hey, fuck you,” Ben manages, heart beating on the other side of the room, all those bubbling foreign words suddenly making do by being shaped into *fucking whatever, I wanna spend the rest of my life with this dickhead*, jabbing at Matt’s waist. “What, you did all that—”

“On purpose? To get you to finally fuckin’ talk to me about this shit? Yeah,” Matt murmurs, face inching in, shit-eating grin plastered across his lips. “Been waiting forever.”

“Fuck were you waiting for?” Ben whispers back, fluttering his gaze from Matt’s lips to the wall marks behind him.

Matt grins, just a couple of inches away. “For you to do something. Anything.”

“I let you eat my crusts,” Ben says rapidly, no hesitation. “Every single time. And I gave you the last beer on Tuesday.”

Matt cackles, breath warm hovering Ben’s mouth. “Sorry, Mr. Romance. I should’ve seen the signs.”

And for that, Ben brings up his left palm to rest against Matt’s cheek, pulls him in closer, and slots their lips together.

He’s pretty sure it’s real this time.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!